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ABSTRACT

This article presents 5-year longitudinal data on parent involvement in the Parent Education Follow Through Program in ten communities in nine states. The data are categorized in terms of the six major ways in which parents can become involved in the program: (1) teachers of their own children, (2) paid paraprofessionals, (3) decision makers and policy advisors, (4) adult learners of new skills, (5) audience or recipients of information and (6) volunteers in the classroom. Program procedures for promoting these roles are described. The chief measures of parental involvement employed were the percentages of parental time spent in the different roles and percentages of the population (parents) who participated. The percentages were found to rise to high levels over the 5-year (1973-1978) period. The data are presented in six tables. (BH)

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Roles in the Parent Education Follow Through Program

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Introduction

Parent Involvement is stressed in the regulations of the national Follow Through program which state that parents shall be involved in policy making and in various other ways which not only influence the program but also enhance their own personal development. This emphasis on parent involvement is also evident in the guidelines for other federal education programs such as Title I and Head Start.

As has been stated in the previous papers of this symposium, the Parent Education Follow Through Program emphasizes this parental involvement component and has as its main intervention strategy the mutual linkages of the home, school, school system, and community. In order to implement the parent involvement component, and subsequently attain the special type of linkages among the systems mentioned above (The Community Impact Model), the Parent Education Follow Through Program has defined six major ways in which a parent may become involved in the education of his or her child.

A description of the six parental roles conceptualized by the late Ira J. Gordon (1970, 1976, 1978) includes parents as: teachers of their own children; paid paraprofessionals; decision makers and policy advisors through Policy Advisory Committees (PAC); adult learners of new skills; audience or

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recipients of information; and as volunteers in the classroom. As can be seen in Figure 1, all six roles are depicted as equal parts of the circle. They are not to be interpreted as hierarchal elements but rather, as elements that provide the opportunity for parents to participate in each and every one of the roles if they so desire. Some parents may prefer active involvement in the Policy Advisory Committees while others may choose to volunteer in the classroom (Gordon, 1978, p. 9). Having some parents in each role is important to the implementation of the program, keeping in mind that any one parent may not be in all six roles at one time. Participation in all these roles reinforces the concept of the Community Impact Model or the mutual linkages of parents with the school, school system and community.

One role of involvement for parents is as teachers of their own children. There is a special emphasis in the Parent Education Follow Through program for helping parents learn more effective ways of teaching their own children at home. A second parental role, the paid paraprofessional home visitor, involves the parent as an employee in the program. In each of the Parent Education Follow Through communities, the persons hired as home visitors must be representative of the population which the program is serving. This home visitor works with other parents by portraying a model for them in the home and spends the remainder of the job time in the classrooms of the children. A third role involves parents as participants in decision making and in the governance activities of the Policy Advisory Committees (PAC). This role allows the parents to become skillful and self-confident advocates for their children. The fourth and fifth roles, namely adult learner and audience or recipients of information, involve parent education for self-enhancement. The personal satisfaction derived from this role helps to increase the parent's understanding of the child. In addition, the parent serves as a role model, thereby possibly improving the parent/child relationship. In carrying out these roles,

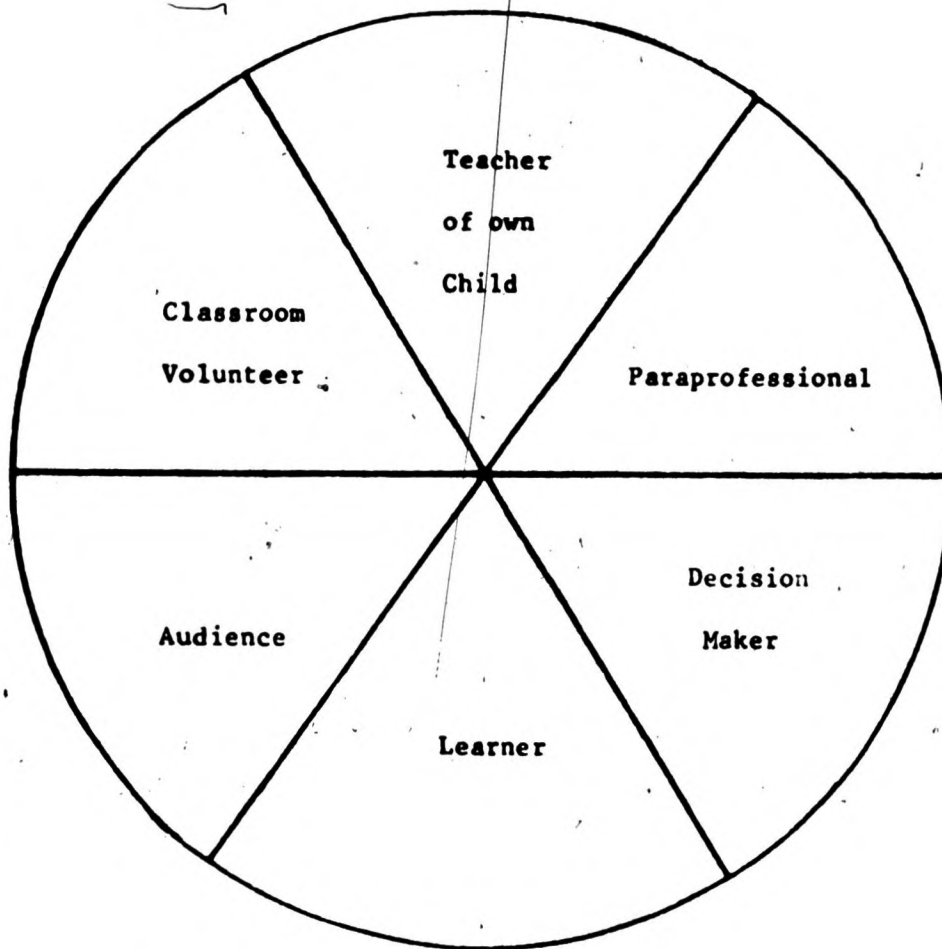


Figure 1. Parental roles in parent involvement.

Taken from:

Gordon, I. J., Olmsted, P. P., Rubin, R. I., & True, J. H. How has Follow Through promoted parent involvement? National Association for the Education of Young Children, Young Children, 1979, in press.

parents are asked to participate in classes or serve as recipients of information in many situations. The last, but certainly not the least important role, focuses upon the parent as a volunteer in the classroom. This type of work helps to inform parents about the school environment as well as helping the school perform a more efficient job of educating its students. Bringing these parents into the school results in changes in teachers as well as parents and children.

These six parental roles exemplify the comprehensive and pluralistic thrust of the program. Due to the comprehensiveness of the program, multiple types of evaluation techniques are required to adequately and validly measure any evidence of success. Most recently, several researchers (Boruch & Rindskopf, 1977; Cook & Reichardt, 1976; Glass, 1976; Porter & Chibucos, 1975; Rindskopf, 1978) have been consistent in advocating multiple analyses for providing validation of causal inferences of programs.

Taking into consideration the comprehensiveness of the program and the recent surge of interest in utilizing multiple techniques of evaluation for providing validation of the program, this paper presents descriptive data as one part of the total evaluation picture showing the impact of the Parent Education Follow Through program. The data are presented according to the major role categories to which they apply. All data were collected in ten of the Parent Education Follow Through communities located in nine different states.

Data Pertaining to Parental Roles: Teacher of Own Child and Paraprofessional

Data pertaining to the key parental roles of teacher of own child and paraprofessional illustrate the following components of our program:

(1) home visitation by paraprofessionals; (2) paraprofessional time spent with teacher in planning for these home visitations; and (3) paraprofessional time spent in instructional activities in the classroom.

In our program, paraprofessionals visit the homes of children as well as work with these children and their teachers in their respective classrooms. These home visits distinguish our program from other Follow Through programs which place a greater emphasis on the classroom than on the home. By both visiting a child's home and working in the classroom, the paraprofessional serves as a key person in a partnership between the home and the school. Moreover, it is during this visit that the paraprofessional helps the parent become a more effective teacher of his or her own child.

The number of planned home visits varies from family to family but typically, one home visit is made each week for each family. After each visit, the paraprofessional completes a home visit observation report designed as the Parent Educator Weekly Report (PEWR). Success for this component of our program was evidenced by more than 80% of the children receiving at least 80% of their planned visits.

In Table 1 are presented the data concerning the percentage of families receiving at least 80% of the scheduled home visits. In one of the communities, 100% of all Follow Through families received at least 80% of their scheduled home visits during the 1977-78 school year. To place this in perspective, over 6,143 families were in the program in 1977-78 and approximately 150,000 home visits were made.

Planning for these home visitations is essential in our parent involvement program. Therefore, the program requires that the teacher and paraprofessional parent educator jointly plan for the week's home visits. These planning data are recorded on the PEWR and evidence of success for this part of our program took the following form. First, the time indicated on the PEWR was examined and those times showing more than one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) hour per week were included in the count. If, of the total paraprofessional-teacher dyads, 75% indicated at least $\frac{1}{2}$ hour planning time, the requirement was met.

Table 1
Percentages of Families Receiving Completed Home Visits^{a,b}
1974 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1973 - 1974	8	23	49
1974 - 1975	22	58	81
1975 - 1976	11	66	83
1976 - 1977	55	90	98
1977 - 1978	76	91	100

^aThese percentages reflect those families receiving greater than 80% of the scheduled home visits.

^bThe years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

The data in Table 2 indicate that an extremely high percentage of paraprofessional-teacher planning has been taking place and the median community percentage has risen from 81% in 1976-77 to 100% in 1977-78.

Other data which deal with the roles of teacher of own child and paraprofessional focus upon this teaching behavior as it occurs in the classroom environment. It is an expectation of the program sponsor that in addition to making home visits, paraprofessionals will also work in the classroom in an instructional capacity. Paraprofessionals were observed during random times and the Taxonomy of Classroom Activities (Gordon & Breivogel, 1976, p. 77) was the observational instrument used to tally the percentages of time spent in various classroom activities. Evidence of success for this component was demonstrated by observing paraprofessionals having at least 50% of their time specified as engagement in instructional activities.

As can be seen in Table 3, the percentages of time spent in these instructional activities by paraprofessionals has increased from 1974-75 to 1977-78 with the exception of one year (1976-77) for which data represented are not completely accurate due to computer problems.

Data Pertaining to Parental Roles: Decision Maker, Adult Learner, and Audience

As a program stressing parent involvement, we are particularly interested in determining both the number of decisions made by parents at meetings and activities. These data stress the parental roles of decision maker, adult learner, and audience. They were collected by participating communities utilizing minutes and sign-in sheets at the meetings and activities. Evidence of success for these components of our program was shown by: 1) the frequencies of parental decisions made which were relevant to the program; 2) at least 35% of the parents attending a PAC meeting; and 3) at least 20% of the parents attending a PAC activity.

Table 2
Percentages of Paraprofessional - Teacher
Dyads Whose Planning for Home Visitations
Exceeded One-half Hour per Week^{a, b}
1977 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1976 - 1977	36	81	91
1977 - 1978	80	100	100

^aThese percentages reflect planning that exceeded one-half hour per week across all weeks.

^bThe years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

Table 3
Percentages of Taxonomy of Classroom
Activity Tallies Indicating Engagement
in Instructional Activities by Paraprofessionals^a
1975 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1974 - 1975	38	59	66
1975 - 1976	38	62	70
1976 - 1977 ^b	28	32	33
1977 - 1978	47	82	89

^a The years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

^b These percentages are low due to problems with the computer program designed to compute the percentages detected late in 1976-77.

Data concerning decisions made by parents at PAC meetings are presented in Table 4. Examples of these decisions address topics such as: determining the criteria for the selection of paraprofessionals, writing proposals, and gathering information for presentation in Washington, D.C., to support the future funding of the program. A more complete listing of decision categories applicable to all of our communities is reflected in Figure 2. In one of our communities, a total of 680 decisions were made at 173 different meetings during the 1977-78 school year.

In Table 5, data are presented concerning parent attendance at various PAC meetings which focus upon topics such as hiring of personnel, proposal writing, and reviewing actions taken by parents to support the future funding of the program. In addition, these data reflect attendance at committee meetings such as the following:

- Executive
- Home Learning Activity Development and Evaluation
- Grievance
- Comprehensive Services
- Career Development
- Evaluation
- Curriculum
- Personnel

Attendance at these meetings has remained consistently high over a five year period.

In addition to these parent meetings, parents have attended such PAC activity functions as Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes and banquets honoring active parents in the program. The parental roles demonstrated at these GED classes and banquets are those of an adult learner and audience, respectively. As one will observe in Table 5, attendance at these and other activities has steadily increased over a five year period. The median percentage of families attending activity functions at least one time across all

Table 4
 Number of Decisions Made
 at Policy Advisory Committee Meetings^a
 1976 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1975-76			
Decisions	7	25	235
Meetings ^b	9	8	138
1976-77			
Decisions	46	107	376
Meetings ^b	20	13	66
1977-78			
Decisions	50	263	680
Meetings ^b	16	60	173

^aThe years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

^bThe numbers indicate the number of meetings at which these decisions were made.

Figure 2

Parental Decision Categories for
the Parent Education Follow Through Communities

Parent Volunteering (classroom,
activities, committees)

Activity Functions

Meeting Date, Time, Place, and
Attendance (Urged to Attend)

PAC Officers

Parent Participation
(At Meetings)

PAC By-Laws and Guidelines

Selection of Paraprofessional and
Professional Applicants

Budget

Proposal

Tasks

Donations for class, kids, etc.

Comprehensive Services (credit
handling, nutrition, dental,
medical)

Child Behavior (Behavior and
how to deal with it)

Washington (Letter Writing)
Legislative Action

Parent Involvement at home and in
general

Setting up Committees and
Committee Business

Conferences (includes workshops)

Parent Educators (requirements,
their job to solicit parents
to attend the meetings)

Evaluation Decisions (question-
naires, etc.)

Miscellaneous

1. Reinforcement for:
 - a. attending
 - b. officers
 - c. lunchroom workers
2. Needs Assessment
3. Shorten meeting for speaker
on property settlement
4. Brainstorming
5. Volunteer for various services
(other than classroom, etc.)
6. Classes for parents
7. Solicit people to support
Follow Through

Table 5

Parental Involvement Data:

Percentages of Parents Who Attend Policy Advisory
Committee Meetings and Activities^a

1974 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1973 - 1974	9	27	59
1974 - 1975	14	28	57
1975 - 1976	18	34	55
1976 - 1977	13	33	53
1977 - 1978	27	41	83

Activities

1973 - 1974	7	15	27
1974 - 1975	4	22	31
1975 - 1976	14	26	44
1976 - 1977	11	27	62
1977 - 1978	20	50	84

^aThe years included in this table represent all the years
for which there are complete sets of data.

communities has increased from 15% in 1973-74 to 50% in 1977-78.

Data Pertaining to Parental Role: Classroom Volunteer

The last type of descriptive data pertains to the involvement of parents as volunteers in the classroom. The program emphasizes this role of volunteering which includes classroom activities for parents such as teaching, keeping records, evaluating, and developing materials. Sign-in sheets are provided for the parents in each classroom and evidence of success in this area is shown by having at least 35% of the parents volunteering in the classroom.

These parental volunteering data are presented in Table 6. The percentage of parents who have volunteered in the classroom at least once has increased from 1973-74 to 1977-78. These high percentages indicate the active involvement on the part of parents when participating in classroom activities such as teaching, keeping records, evaluating, and developing materials.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the data presented in this paper represent one element of the multifaceted evaluation techniques employed in the Parent Education Follow Through Program. These descriptive data are impressive in that they show the successful impact of the program as evidenced by the high level of parent involvement in the home, classroom, and at PAC meetings and activities at which parents make decisions regarding their children, the Follow Through program, the school system, and the community.

It is the author's opinion that if federal regulations require parental involvement, then differential types of evaluation focusing on this type of involvement should be done. Their inclusion helps to guarantee a comprehensive assessment of the impact of educational and social change on programs such as the one presented in this paper.

Table 6

Parental Involvement Data:

Percentages of Parents Who Volunteered in the Classroom^a

1974 - 1978

Year	Lowest Community	Median Community	Highest Community
1973 - 1974	19	42	58
1974 - 1975	29	45	70
1975 - 1976	27	42	96
1976 - 1977	28	55	84
1977 - 1978	36	76	90

^aThe years included in this table represent all the years for which there are complete sets of data.

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